

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 930
INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
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AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 4142

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR BL
SUBJECT: UNDERSECRETARY'S VISIT TO BOLIVIA

1. SUMMARY: UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM'S VISIT TO LA PAZ PROVIDED A
FILLIP TO GOB MORALE AND ITS PLANS FOR JULY ELECTIONS. IN HIS
MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT BANZER, THE ARMED FORCES COMMANDERS AND
HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS THE UNDER SECRETARY COMMENDED BOLIVIA AND THE
GOB FOR ITS HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS, RESTRAINT IN ARMS PURCHASES AND
DECISION TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE VIA JULY
ELECTIONS.
IN THESE SESSIONS AND PUBLICALLY HE EXPRESSED U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE
ELECTIONS AND OUR HOPE FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETIONS OF THIS PROCESS.
IN HIS UNPRECEDENTED JOINT MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES
AND RIVAL POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS WER WERE ABLE TO EXPRESS OUR HOPE
THAT THE COOPERATION OF WINNERS AND LOSERS NEEDED TO MAKE DEMOCRACY
WORK WOULD BE POSSIBLE IN THE "NEW" BOLIVIA. HEAVY PRESS ATTENTION
TO THESE MEETINGS STRESSED THAT IF THEIR SPIRIT SURVIVED, THERE MAY
INDEED BE HOPE FOR BOLIVIAN DEMOCRACY. BY VALIDATING THE EXPECTATION
THAT RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL ENHANCE BOLIVIA'S IMAGE
ABROAD, THE UNDER SECRETARY'S VISIT BRIGHTENED THE PROSPECTS FOR
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COMPLETION OF THAT PROCESS. END SUMMARY.
2. AS THE HIGHEST-RANKING AMERICAN TO VISIT BOLIIVA SINCE HENRY
KISSINGER
TWO YEARS AGO, UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM'S VISIT RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE
ATTENTION FROM THE PRESS, GOB LEADERS AND CIVILIAN POLITICIANS. IN ALL

HIS MEETINGS THE UNDER SECRETARY INDICATED U.S. RECOGNITION OF
BOLIVIA'S
PREGRESS IN RECENT YEARS AND EXPRESSED U.S. HOPES FOR SUCCESSFUL
COMPLETION OF THE RETURN TO CONSITITUTIONAL RULE.

3. IN A CORDIAL MEETING WITH THE UNDER SECRETARY, PRESIDENT BANZER SAID HE HOPED THIS VISIT WOULD LEAD TO GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF BOLIVIA

IN WASHINGTON. THE UNDER SECRETARY SAID BOLIVIA WAS ALREADY ATTRACTING

CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION. HE NOTED THAT PARTY OF THIS PURPOSE IN COMING TO

BOLIVIA WAS TO CONVEY OUR APPRECIATION FOR, AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF, THE PROGRESSIVE THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING IN BOLIVIA, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD

TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC RULE. HE EXPRESSED U.S. APPRECIATION OF BANZER'S DECISION TO CALL ELECTIONS, WHICH MUST NOT HAVE BEEN AN EASY DECISION TO MAKE, GIVEN ITS MANY RAMIFICATIONS. HE NOTED THAT IF THE MILITARY CAN SUCCESSFULLY COMPLEMENT ITS RECORD OF RESTORATION OF POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH AN ORDERLY

RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC RULE VIA JULY ELECTIONS, THIS WILL BE A UNIQUE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE REGION.

4. BANZER SAID THE GOB AND THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY BELIEVE IN DEMOCRACY BUT,

IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY LIKE BOLIVIA DEMOCRACY HAS A HIGH COST. HE HOPED THE U.S. WOULD RECOGNIZE THIS. HE SAID THAT BOLIVIA'S LAST SEVEN

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YEARS OF PROSPERITY AND ITS RESTORED IMAGE OVERSEAS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN

POSSIBLE UNDER A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT DURING THIS PERIOD. HE DEFENDED

HIS DE FACTO GOVERNMENT AS ONE WHICH HAD NEVER IMPOSED ANYTHING WITHOUT

DIALOGUE AND ACCOMODATION. BANZER NOTED THAT BOLIVIA'S ELECTORAL PLANS

HAD ENCOUNTERED UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS; THE GREATER PART OF THE PUBLIC DID

NOT WANT ELECTIONS; VOTER REGISTRATION WAS STILL SMALL; THE PROCESS HAD

INSPIRED EXAGGERATED WAGE DEMANDS AND REQUESTS FOR NEW PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS IN ALL THE PROVINCES; SOME VIOLENCE WAS OCCURRING; AND WHILE BOLIVIANS HAD MATURED POLITICALLY, ALL THEIR POLITICIANS HAD NOT. NEVERTHELESS, BANZER EMPHASIZED, THE GOVERNMENT WAS DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN

ELECTORAL PLANS AND WOULD RECONSIDER ONLY IN LIGHT OF A BREAKDOWN OF ORDER

WHICH THREATENS THE LIFE OF THE CITIZENRY GENERALLY.

5. BANZER SAID HE APPRECIATED UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM'S KIND WORDS AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS GOVERNMENT AND TO HIMSELF, INCLUDING ON HUMAN

RIGHTS. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS HAS ITS COSTS AS WELL. HE SAID THAT IN BOLIVIA THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE SOCIETY MUST COME FIRST AND THEN THOSE OF INDIVIDUALS. BANZER SAID THE WOULD COMPLETE HIS ADMINISTRATION WITH A SENSE OF PERSONAL

SATISFACTION OVER HIS RECORD.

6. BANZER CONCLUDED BY ASKING THE UNDER SECRETARY TO CONVEY TO PRESIDENT

CARTER THAT BANZER HAD DONE EVERYTHING HE COULD TO ASSURE THE COMPLETION

OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. BANZER FELT THAT EVEN THOUGH HE HAD MET PRESIDENT CARTER ONLY ONCE, THE COMMON BURDEN OF DIFFICULT POLITICAL MISSIONS CREATED CONSIDERABLE EMPATHY BETWEEN THEM. HE WISHED PRESIDENT

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CARTER EVERY SUCCESS IN THE REST OF HIS ADMINISTRATION.

7. THE ARMED SERVICES COMMANDERS AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE ALSO TOLD THE

UNDER SECRETARY THAT THE MILITARY WILL SUPPORT THE ELECTION PROCESS, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE UNEASY ABOUT THE RETURN TO BOLIVIA OF A NUMBER OF VIOLENT EXTREMISTS. THE COMMANDERS RAISED TWO ISSUES WHERE THEY FELT THE U.S. COULD BE MORE SUPPORTIVE OF BOLIVIA'S POLITICAL PLANS. FIRST,

THE BEMOANED U.S. PLANS TO SELL GSA TIN AND SAID THAT SALES THIS YEAR WOULD NOT HELP BOLIVIA'S RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT OR ITS EFFORTS

TO MEET MINERS' NEEDS FOR BETTER PAY AND WORKING CONDITIONS. SECOND, THE

SERVICE COMMANDERS DECRIED DECLINING U.S. MILITARY AID TO BOLIVIA. THEY

NOTED BOLIVIA'S SINGULAR RESTRAINT ON ARMS PURCHASES, ITS DECLARED NEUTRALITY IN ANY REGIONAL CONFLICT, THE MILITARY'S EMPHASIS ON CIVIC ACTION AND DECISION TO CALL ELECTIONS AND RHETORICALLY ASKED IF THE U.S.

DID NOT SUPPORT THIS KIND OF MILITARY, WHAT KIND DID IT SUPPORT. THEY

SAID THAT WHAT THE U.S. WAS IN FACT DOING IN BOLIVIA WAS TERMINATING MAP AND HALVING FMS CREDITS IN THE COMING YEAR. AS AN INDICATION OF SOME SUPPORT FOR THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY'S RECORD, THE COMMANDERS REQUESTED THE UNDER SECRETARY TO URGE U.S. APPROVAL OF 12 YEAR TERMS FOR THE FY 78 FMS CREDIT, TO BE USED FOR HOSPITAL EQUIPMENT, HELICOPTERS

AND AIRCRAFT SPARES. THE UNDER SECRETARY EXPLAINED THAT IN THE CONGRESS'S AND ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORT TO LIMIT TOTAL ARMS TRANSFERS SOME SPECIFIC NEEDS, EVEN QUITE WORTHY ONES, WERE GOING TO BE UNMET IN THE FUTURE. HE SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE MATTER OF A 12 YEAR MATURITY FOR THE FY 78 FMS CREDIT. ON TIN, HE NOTED WE WOULD TAKE IN TO

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ACCOUNT BOLIVIA'S SITUATION IN THE CONSULTATIONS TO FOLLOW CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION OF SALES.

8. THREE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES (VICTOR PAZ, JUAN PEREDA, JOSE PATINO

AYOROA), THE HEAD OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ASSEMBLY, LUSI ADOLFO SILES SALINES, THE INTERIOR MINISTER, AND PRESIDENT OF THE ELECTORAL COURT MATILLA ATTENDED THE AMBASSADOR'S LUNCHEON FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY. (A FOURTH CANDIDATE, HERNAN SILES ZUAZO, ATTENDED THE EVENING RECEPTION.) BOTH THE LUNCHEON AND THE RECEPTION FOR POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS WERE CHARACTERIZED BY THE PARTICIPANTS AND THE PRESS AS INDICA-

TIONS NOT ONLY OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS BUT ALSO AS EVIDENCE OF THE NEW ENVIRONMENT AND MATURITY OF BOLIVIAN POLITICS. BOTH OCCASIONS FEATURED UNIQUE VIGNETTES, SUCH AS SILES SALINES CHATTING QUIETLY WITH COLONEL PATINO, WHO HELPED REMOVE HIM FROM THE PRESIDENCY TEN YEARS AGO; HERNAN SILES REUNITED, AFTER 14 YEARS IN EXILE,

WITH HIS FORMER FINANCE MINISTER JORGE TAMAYO, WHO HE HAD NOT SEEN IN ALMOST TWENTY YEARS; VICTOR PAZ INTERPRETING SPANISH TO ENGLISH FOR

JUAN PEREDA. ALL THE CANDIDATES INDICATED THAT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS HAS GONE SMOOTHLY UP TO NOW, ALTHOUGH SILES ZUAZO AND PAZ COMPLAINED ABOUT OFFICIAL FAVORITISM FOR PEREDA (HIS USE OF MILITARY PLANES, GREATER COVERAGE BY NATIONAL TELEVISION). PAZ AND PATINO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT

A RISK OF RIGGING ELECTION RETURNS FROM REMOTE RURAL AREAS. THE UNDER SECRETARY NOTED THAT BOLIVIA'S POLITICAL PARTIES WOULD HAVE TO GET THEIR PEOPLE TO MONITOR POLLING PLACES AND SUGGESTED THEY INVITE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS IF THE THOUGHT THESE WOULD PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF DETERENCE AND APPEAL. BOTH CANDIDATES EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS

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ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS, CITING THAT THIS WOULD TEND TO VALIDATE THE ELECTIONS RESULTS EVEN IF UNDETECTED FRAUD OCCURRED.

9. THERE WAS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF NEW POLITICAL ALLIANCES BEYOND THOSE ALREADY FORMED. SILES SALINES SAID HE WAS TRYING TO UNITE THE CIVILIAN LEFT, BUT THE PROSPECTS WERE NOT GOOD. PAZ EXPRESSED HESITATION ABOUT

JOINING AN ALLIANCE (WITH SILES ZUAZO) WHICH INCLUDED THE COMMUNITIS. PEREDA TOLD US HE AND PAZ WOULD NOT JOIN UP. ONLY RIGHT-WING CANDIDATE PATION EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT PAZ-- IN A IMPROBABLE MOVE-- WOULD SUPPORT HIS CANDIDACY.

10. AT THE LUNCHEON SILES SALINES, HEAD OF BOLIVIA'S PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS, DESCRIBED THE COUNTRY'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE HUNGER STRIKE EARLY THIS YEAR, AS "MIRACULOUS."

11. IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH INTERIOR MINISTER (AND ACTING FOREIGN

MINISTER) JIMENEZ, THE UNDER SECRETARY URGED ACCELERATED ACTION ON TRIALS OF U.S. PRISONERS, IN ANTICIPATION OF THE U.S.-BOLIVIAN TREATY COMING

INTO EFFECT, AND GOB ACTION TO IMPLEMENT THE BAN ON UNREGISTERED COCA PRODUCTION. JIMENEZ SAID AS SOON AS THE U.S. SENATE MOVED ON THE TREATY, THE GOB WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE PROSECUTORS AND JUDGES TO MOVE ANY NEARLY-COMPLETED CASES TO A CONCLUSION. HE CLAIMED

THAT THE LA PAZ COURT RECESS, STARTING JUNE 12, WOULD NOT BRING ALL TRIALS TO A HALT. THE GOB, ACCORDING TO JIMENEZ, WILL MOVE STRONGLY AGAINST ILLEGAL COCA PRODUCTION, BUT HE SAID NOT TO EXPECT ANYTHING IN

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THE 6 WEEKS REMAINING UNTIL ELECTIONS.
12. THIS REPORT WAS PREPARED AFTER THE UNDER SECRETARY'S DEPARTURE.
BOEKER

NOTE BY OC/T: MESSAGE DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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